



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Robert L. Davis

**SUBJECT: TRUANCY PROGRAM
REDUCTIONS**

DATE: May 24, 2005

Approved	/s/	Date	06/02/05
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The memorandum is prepared in response to the Mayor's March 2005 Budget Message to minimize reductions to the Truancy Abatement Program and explore methods to expand usage of models in partnership with School Districts and parents.

BACKGROUND

The Community Services Division of the San Jose Police Department provides the following truancy reduction programs:

- School Habitual Absentee Reduction Program (SHARP)
- Student Attendance Review Board (SARB)
- Truancy Abatement/Burglary Suppression Program (TABS)

The SHARP Program gathers truant data from the school attendance staff and Police Officers contact families to request improved attendance. This service is offered to all of the school districts in the City at no cost. Currently, only four schools participate in this service due to inadequate school attendance staff. This program is not at-risk under Tier One, as the Officers who provide this service are assigned to the School Liaison Unit, which is not listed as a program cut in the Proposed Budget.

The SARB program is coordinated by the District Attorney's Office (DA). As truants are identified and processed by the DA and the School District staff, Police Officers issue citations for parents/students who are unable to comply with minimum attendance guidelines. As with SHARP, the School Liaison Unit Officers provide this service, and with no reductions at the Tier One level for the School Liaison Unit, this program is also not at-risk in the Proposed Budget.

The Police Department currently implements the TABS Program by utilizing off-duty Police Officers on overtime to seek and detain truants, and by providing truants with counseling services at both TABS East and West Centers. When a truant is detained by an Officer, the student is either returned to school or processed at a TABS Center. One center is located at the PAL complex in East San Jose and the other is at the Willows Senior Center on Lincoln Ave. At these Centers, truancy counseling is currently provided by Cross Cultural Services Center, Social Advocates for Youth, and Catholic Charities. This program would be impacted by Proposed Budget actions as discussed below.

ANALYSIS

Each of the three truancy reduction programs is based on collaboration between dedicated Police Officers and school district attendance staff. The schools have not contributed any funds to support these services and previous attempts to obtain funding from the School Districts have been unsuccessful. As a result of the request to reduce costs, the truancy current system is proposed for some reduction in capacity.

The Proposed 2005-2006 Operating Budget includes actions that would result in service reductions for the TABS Program as follows: elimination of funding for overtime pay of truancy Police Officers, elimination of funding for contractual counseling services, and consolidation of two TABS Centers into one East Center. The Officer assigned to West TABS Center (Lincoln Avenue) would move to the East TABS Center (PAL). Patrol Officers could still drop-off truants at the East Center as they find them. Currently, the Patrol Officers detain less than 5% of the TABS truants. One of the convenient aspects of the current TABS system is that Patrol Officers who find a truant anywhere in the City can transfer the truant to a TABS Officer. This allows the Officer to stay in his assigned area, and quickly return to 'in-service' status.

With reductions in the truancy reduction capacity of both the Police Department and the school districts, truancy reduction strategies must identify stakeholders and form plans to increase participation. The Police Department will initiate efforts to find capacity in community-based organizations in the City to provide services to delinquents and to assume some of the services provided by the TABS Program. These stakeholders must be identified and engaged in the effort to promote youth development and delinquency/truancy reduction.

CONCLUSION

Education is critical to the development of youth, the prevention of gang activity, delinquency and victimization, and the stability of the City's economy by providing a capable workforce. In response to proposed reductions in truancy programs and services, all stakeholders will be encouraged to become more involved in promoting the future of our City through our youth. The current 2004-2005 staffing level for the Police Department's School Liaison Unit and TABS Team is maintained in the Proposed 2005-2006 Budget. With this Team (consisting of two Sergeants and 12 Officers), the Police Department intends to begin collaborative efforts involving school districts and parent groups to promote attendance and reduce truancy. These efforts could begin with email messages to schools and community groups emphasizing the importance of school attendance and offering to meet with them to discuss these topics. The Department will continue to offer SHARP and SARB services, give presentations to parent/teacher groups upon request, and seek input from the schools, parents and community groups on ways to improve the delivery of truancy reduction services.

/s/

ROBERT L. DAVIS
Chief of Police